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THROUGH THE SILK AND TEA DISTRICTS OF KIANG-NAN AND CHEKIANG PROVINCE.

BY

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The interest of the whole world is again centred in China, on account of the Boxer Rebellion. Since the quelling of the Tai-ping rebellion in 1864 the Chinese Government has had little trouble to face in the interior of so great a country, but after the Chinese-Japanese war in 1894 the reigning Emperor had to subdue the Mohammedan revolt in Kansu and several other uprisings in different parts of the country. Another menace was the secret societies, whose aims were the exclusion of foreigners from China and the murdering of missionaries and converts. It is hoped that the present disturbances in the Middle Kingdom will soon be pacified, so that foreigners may be able to travel safely in the interior. There is no doubt that one of the sources of the opposition to foreigners arises from the economic danger that the coolie classes apprehend in the new means of communication and transportation, which threaten to deprive them of their chief means of income as carriers and runners. The Chinese prefer their slow and primitive way of travel—and the methods of getting about in China are very different from ours. During my stay of five years in China I made frequent journeys into the interior, and was compelled to accommodate myself to the Chinese methods of travel. Once I was about to visit the well-known Ping-Shui valley, in which region most of the famous green tea of that name is cultivated, much of which is consumed in America. I soon found a convenient Mandarin boat, which took my Chinese teacher, my boy-servant and myself to the Imperial city of Hang Chow, with its beautiful views. The vessel on which we travelled was a very commodious one, of flat construction. My teacher occupied the compartment on the forepart of the ship. My room, which contained an opium sofa, stools and a table, was a little larger. The only thing which interfered with our comfort was a plague of insects. My boy-servant put himself in a place adjoining the bunks of the dozen coolies who served as sailors. These were supervised by the Laodah, or boatman.

Our journey was fairly agreeable at the start. We made arrange-

ments with a so-called steamboat train. This is a daily-running steam launch, which, since the opening of Hang Chow as a treaty port in 1897, plies about these waters, towing several Chinese freight and passenger boats. It takes about two days, at the rate of about five miles an hour, to reach Hang Chow. The country which we traversed is known for its fertility, but the general aspect of the territory along the Whang-pu and the Grand-Canal is monotonous. We passed through several populous cities. We were especially taken with the cities of Ka-Zay and Ka-Shing, situated upon the borders of the Imperial Canal. On the outer wall of Ka-Shing we noticed the three interesting sister pagodas, Santa-se. While I was on deck I was the object of curiosity to the assembled natives, who immediately called me "Yang Kwei tze," denoting foreign devil. We reached the foreign settlement of Hang Chow after midnight of the second day of our journey, having been stopped about midnight at the Custom-house of the foreign settlement, where we were registered. We immediately started for Hang Chow City, which is about six hours' travel from the settlement, then consisting of the Custom-house bungalow, a semi-foreign-built house, a missionary hospital and several godowns, which are storage places for the merchandise of the port. The tugboat, which could proceed no farther, now left us. According to Chinese custom, we should have had to remain in the settlement all night; but I compelled the Laodah to proceed, and also asked him to wake me if for any reason the boat should have to stop. About three o'clock in the morning I was informed that we had arrived at an obstruction in the canal. It was one of those primitive canal locks consisting of a mere embankment, with a provision for raising the boat by a derrick. The coolies in charge of the station were fast asleep. Our boat had to move to shore, and as soon as this was done I sprang on land with a big Japanese stick. With this I almost broke the door of the hut where the would-be watchman was enjoying a good rest. I finally awakened him, and with some small coins persuaded him to hurry to seek a dozen coolies, who were to take our boat over the lock, known as "Hole-over." The Imperial Canal has a great many such locks in the neighborhood of Hang Chow; they are of ingenious, antique construction, and prevent the floods of the Yellow Sea from overflowing the country.

It took some time before our boat was fastened with very strong manila ropes. The coolies tried their best to bring us over as quickly as possible, as they seemed to intend to continue their

slumber; but the pulley did not work fast enough, and it took much time, with all possible energy, to raise the heavy Mandarin boat to the top of the embankment. From this embankment it slipped down to the opposite side of the canal by its own weight. We were now ready to continue our journey to the city gate of Hang Chow, where we arrived about five o'clock in the morning.

The gate was still closed. No entrance is permitted until sunrise. We anchored in the midst of hundreds of boats in a large basin of the canal. Most of the boats around us were filled with articles of food, which were intended for the Hang Chow market.

It was long after six o'clock, and the city gate was still closed. I waited patiently on deck for the moment of opening, but when at half-past six we were still in waiting, I began to fire cartridges, and made such a noise that finally one of the officials appeared on the top of the wall to discover the cause of the alarm. I called to him to hurry and open the gates. He promised to do so, but it took some time before the guards were dressed and ready to open the heavy wooden entrance. A very curious sight struck me when we entered the archway of the gate; about fifteen or twenty guards were at the gate around and robbed every boat as it came along. Those boats which passed in the middle of the stream were the only ones that escaped the general pillage.

Our boat continued the voyage through the suburbs of Hang Chow. It took another hour before we completed the first stage of our journey. We had to stop in a muddy stream. Around us were a great many flower-boats, where the gayeties of life begin with sunset and are carried on with all the decorous solemnity of thorough Bowery life. At this hour on these boats all the singing girls and Chinese musicians were fast asleep. But I could judge from the neighborhood that we had landed on the Hang Chow Bowery.

While my boy packed our belongings, I went on shore with my Chinese teacher and made arrangements with chair-carriers to take us through the very populous city and noted surroundings. We also hired a dozen coolies to carry all our packages to Hsi-Hsing, a city opposite the mouth of the river, named Tsien Tang Kiang, on which Hang Chow is situated. Hsi-Hsing is over thirty li, or more than ten miles, distant. My teacher and I took the palanquins, or chairs, and we began our inspection. We were carried to the western gate of the city, where the walls rise by the charmingly pretty Western-Lake. The lake is surrounded by beautiful hills, on which stand inviting temples and pagodas, and it is dotted with little islands, which are connected with one

another by means of peculiar Chinese arch bridges. We left our chairs and took a little trip around the lake. Then we went to the top of a hill, upon which stood a pretty little house, built in European style, next to an old ruined pagoda. I discovered that this attractive residence was the summer home of the Church of England missionaries of Hang Chow. We were enchanted with the grand view from this point. We proceeded on our journey and stopped at several Yamen, the official residence of the Chinese Mandarins. We also entered the great and handsome city temple, which Buddhistic house of worship is situated on a hill within the walls of the town. In the business street of the city we entered several silk shops and looked at the beautiful Hang Chow silks. This city boasts of an Imperial silk factory, the looms of which turn out yearly thousands of pieces of the finest kind of silk, mostly consumed by the Imperial household in Peking. My teacher visited several tea-houses and bought some of the finest kind of Ping-Shui tea.

We arrived at the ferry just before the last afternoon boat crossed the mouth of the Tsien Tang Kiang. This capacious boat did not look very clean. It was filled with vegetables and all kind of food stuff, besides general freight, a number of coolies and other passengers. We were happy to possess chairs, in which we were carried on the boat and placed in some sort of a reservation for palanquins, but could not escape the odors that emanated from the variegated cargo. I could not remain in the chair, but went to the stern of the boat, where I could at least get some fresh air behind the open sail. It took about a half-hour to reach the southern bank of the stream. We were, luckily, in time to see the bore or great flood which, during the equinox, approaches the coast of Hang Chow with thunder-like noise; it appears like an enormous water-wall, which rises up to 24 feet, arriving with great velocity at the embankments of the Hang Chow Gulf, entering also the Tsien Tang Kiang. The gulf and the river are very dangerous at such times to the shipping world.

We proceeded now to Hsi-Hsing, which was about 15 li distant. Our coolies carried us to a tea-shop, where our boy was awaiting us with our belongings. The place was filled with a number of dispatch-boatmen, who offered their boats. I soon perceived by their enormous prices that they had formed a kind of trust. I succeeded after some hunt in procuring the upper deck of a freight-boat, which seemed to me safer and more comfortable than travelling by dispatch-boat. At night I discovered, to my dismay, that my fel-

low-passengers on the lower deck were largely composed of pigs and geese, who did not hesitate to make the night hideous with their peculiar noises. Along the river to Shoa-shing is a chain of mountains, forming the eastern extremity of the Himalaya.

We arrived at Hsiao-Hsing at dawn. First I ascended one of the surrounding hills to seek invigoration after the ill effects of the night journey. The hill was situated near the city wall, and I had a splendid view of Hsiao-Hsing's prominent dwellings, pagodas and temples, most of which were on the banks of creeks. Hsiao-Hsing is termed generally "the Venice of China," only because of the many creeks and canals which break the city up into numerous islands; but in no other respect can it be fairly compared to the beautiful, poetic Venice.

Before my departure I visited the temple of the 500 Apostles of Buddha, called the Lohans. They consist of a gallery of fine gold carvings. On departing, and before passing the South-Eastern City gate, we saw a great number of Chinese statues, generally known as "Women Monuments." These monuments are erected by edict of the Chinese Emperor, and they set in most cases an example to the posterity of faithful women. One of these monuments attracted my special attention. It bore both a Chinese and a European inscription. I went ashore and examined it, and found that it was a memorial to the French soldiers and sailors who fell in subduing the Taiping Rebellion of 1862-64.

From this place we started with two dispatch-boats for Yu-Yao. These boats, also called post-boats, are about 9 or 10 feet long and about 3 or 4 feet wide, tapering to a point at both ends. They are covered with a thatched roof, supposed to serve as a protection in all kinds of weather. The boat is generally manned by one coolie, who propels it by pushing the oar with his foot and holding the steering rudder in his hand. These dispatch-boats are specially adapted for travel in shallow waters. The boatman, while using his leg in propelling the boat, prepares the meals, and attends to both duties without trouble. He cooks his food with the unoccupied hand, and crams the rice into his mouth with the "chop-sticks" in a quiet way and without any inconvenience. We were soon out of the city gate. The boat I travelled on led the way, and behind followed the second boat, containing my teacher and boy-servant. The channel soon broadened, and we drifted on the Tzao-Wu-Kiang, which lies between mountains and beautiful valleys and passes through the famous Ping-Shui valley. A few miles from Hsiao-Hsing we saw a romantic Mandarin garden for the amuse-

ment of pleasure-seekers. The typical spot for amusements in China is one containing many bridges, caves and labyrinths. Such was this park, built close to the mountains and to the water. I intended to reach the Hole-over watershed at Shang-Yu in the evening, otherwise we should have had difficulty in getting over the broad embankment before the next morning. I therefore urged the two boatmen to hurry down the stream; I was satisfied, because we covered a distance of 100 li, or about 33 miles, in nine hours. Our progress by boat was here impeded by a stretch of intervening land, over which our boats had to be carried on the backs of coolies to reach the continuation of the waterway. We resumed our water journey until we reached the gates of Pa-Kwan. I was awakened from my sleep by the coolie, who told me that the Mandarin soldier refused to let us pass the gate. My argument with the soldier proving futile, I directly entered the Yamen near-by, where I found one room lit up. I went straight in and surprised a lot of Mandarins coolly smoking their opium pipes, while others were playing games. It was comical how they jumped on seeing a stranger. I addressed them most politely in the Mandarin language, and demanded that we be allowed to continue our voyage. They granted my wish most courteously, and one of the Mandarins himself went to open the gate. We were now on the straight way to Yu-Yao, where we arrived at about six o'clock in the morning. We came to the landing-place of the Yu-Yao-Ningpo steamboats.

My teacher and also my boy-servant, carrying our baggage, took the opportunity to reach Ningpo before evening by means of this Chinese morning boat. I preferred riding a whole day down the river on a dispatch-boat, to which I had accustomed myself, for I could not stand travelling on one of those ill-smelling Chinese steamboats. I expected to reach Ningpo late in the evening, so went ahead with my dispatch-boat, and stopped at a pretty little hill, where I thought of getting off. I made the coolie understand that I wished him to meet me a little farther down the stream, where another spur of the mountain approached the river. When I arrived there he was awaiting me. I had this same experience with my boatman several times, and was always successful. The country was very interesting. Sometimes I went to a small village. Rice was cultivated in most of the fields, and the hillsides showed pretty tea plantations. About noon-time, when I again left the boat to take a look into one of the valleys, I underrated the distance. I therefore tried to get straight down from the midst of the

valley, traversing muddy rice-fields, until I reached the river, believing that I could meet my boat along the bank of the stream. After a very long and fatiguing walk through these fields, I came to the water front, where, to my great disappointment, I could not find my boat. I called for my boatman, but without avail. I was almost in despair what to do, when some cormorant fishing-boats passed down the river. I attracted their attention. They rowed over, and agreed to take me down the river in their most uncommodious raft, on which two fishermen and a dozen birds were placed.* After more than an hour's floating we passed a larger place on the bank of the river, and I became convinced that in order to find my boat I must retrace my way. I landed, and at once took a sailing craft going up the stream. The wind blew at a good rate, and my perseverance was finally rewarded by finding my boat, which bore my coat as a flag. When questioned the coolie explained that, as he had not found me, he rowed back and quietly waited at the place where I had left him.

The day soon darkened, and the coolie rowed down the river. I dreaded to sleep in this most uncomfortable position on the floor of the boat, and luckily found a substitute oar, and with this I helped the coolie row, and thereby we completed our trip in half the time it would otherwise have taken. At about 4 A.M. we approached Ningpo. It was not very easy to steer clear of the many junks and other vessels, without any light, anchored in the harbour. We succeeded in this also, and finally arrived at the landing-place of the foreign settlement, where about thirty foreigners live. I went afterwards to the bungalow of the Custom-house, where my friends expected me.

I did not return to Shanghai by the overland route. I had accomplished my desire of studying the silk districts of Hang Chow and the tea plantations of the Ping-Shui valley. There are few foreigners, with the exception of explorers and missionaries, who dare to undertake such tedious voyages. The means of communication are in no way inviting, and railroads are still in the distant future.

After a sufficient rest in Ningpo, I took the coast steamer to the so-called Eastern model settlement of Shanghai.

* Cormorants are commonly used in China for fishing purposes. A ring, fastened around the neck of the bird, prevents the cormorant from swallowing the quarry.